(b) whether Government have resurrected the situation by taking proper observation on the spot;

(c) if so, the details about the area visited and the improvement being made by Government towards Tsunamic victims; and

(d) whether Government have checked the flee of population from Andaman and Nicobar Islands?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI S. RAGUPATHY): (a) to (c) An Inter-Ministerial Central Team had visited the Tsunami affected areas in Andaman and Nicobar Islands for an on the spot damage assessment and requirement of funds. The team visited the South Andaman, Little Andaman, Car Nicobar, Katchal, Chowara, Terrassa, Great Nicobar and Compbell Bay. The Government of India have approved a special package of Rs. 821.88 crore named as "Rajiv Gandhi Rehabilitation Package for Tsunami affected areas" to provide assistance for immediate relief and response, revival of fishery and agriculture sectors, construction of temporary (inter-mediate) houses, immediate repair/ restoration of infrastructure besides special relief to orphans, unmarried girls above 18 years of age, widows and disabled persons. Separately, a Core Group under the Planning Commission has been constituted to plan and make provisions for long term rehabilitation infrastructure, reconstruction and providing multi hazard proof permanent houses to those who have lost houses in the Tsunami.

(d) Initially, some of the settlers and tourists in the Island had desired to return to the main land and such willing persons were evacuated. However, there are no reports of the population wanting to flee out of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Dead bodies in Tsunami affected areas

210. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that thousands of bodies were lying scattered for days together in Tsunami affected areas;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Government felt short of manpower to collect the bodies and identify them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY) (a) to (c) The Tsunami disaster has caused extensive damage to life and property. 10273 lives were lost and 5823 people were reported to be missing most of whom are feared dead. The State Governments and UT Administrations had immediately launched search and rescue operations with the help of the Armed Forces, Para Military Forces, local community and Non Governmental Organizations. The dead bodies were retrieved/recovered and were cremated/buried as per the due process including identification wherever feasible. The whole process took a few days, which generally happens with disasters of such magnitude.

Criteria adopted to confer Bharat Ratna

211. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the criteria adopted by Government of India to confer Bharat Ratna on any person;

(b) whether there is any committee which scrutinize the names of the people for Bharat Ratna;

(c) the terms of reference given to the committee; and

(d) the details of members of the committee which scrutinises the name for this honour?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MANIKRAO GAVIT) (a) Bharat Ratna is awarded for exceptional service towards the advancement of art, literature and science and in recognition of public service of the highest order.

(b) to (d) Recommendations or award of Bharat Ratna are made by the Prime Minister to the President. He is free to consult anyone he chooses.

Visit of Tsunami hit areas

212. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he visited all the Tsunami' affected regions and seen for himself the quality of relief exercises and status of the socio-economic rehabilitation of the survivors;